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Book Reviews

Homeric Greek. A Book for Beginners. By CLYDE PHARR.
Boston: D. C. Heath & Company, 1921. Pp. xlii+391.

For several years we have heard of Professor Pharr's work with beginners in Greek, but up to the present time his doings have been shadowed with an agreeable mystery. With the publication of his book the secret is out and he spreads his apparatus before us.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing revolutionary about this book, which embodies Professor Pharr's ideas, aside from the choice of Homer rather than Xenophon or some other Attic prose writer, as its basis, and even this, as the author assures us (pp. xvi f.), is not new, but goes back to the Roman school-masters and to modern educators like Herbart and Ahrens. I may add to his list of instances the practice in Professor Dewey's "go-as-you-please" school at Chicago a decade or two ago, where, as a friend once told me, the pupils began their Greek with Homer and enjoyed it thoroughly. In the actual teaching Professor Pharr, I take it, has nothing new to offer, and since he subscribes at once to my own golden rule, Professor Gildersleeve's epigram, which he quotes on page vi, and believes, as I do, that the student should learn the most useful forms first, I find myself in accord with him on these fundamentals.

The book contains, after the preface and introductory essay, a chapter about Homer and his works; then seventy-seven lessons, each with grammar assignments to learn, vocabulary, prose sentences in both English and Greek for translation, and a passage from the first book of the *Iliad* varying from five lines in the first lessons to a dozen or more in the last; then a grammar of one hundred and forty-two pages, and finally Greek-English and English-Greek vocabularies. Lesson by lesson English derivatives are given, and the main vocabulary is arranged in simple alphabetical order, which after all is less confusing to young students than grouping words under their roots. In the first few lessons Homer is not quoted; the first two declensions and the first four tenses of the verb are studied, while the words soon to be seen in the *Iliad* are used as the basis of the Greek and English sentences. At Lesson XIII come *Iliad* i. 1-5, with notes, and hereafter each lesson has its Homeric passage. Throughout, Homeric forms are set for the student to learn and are used in all the exercises.

Homeric Greek is not in any sense a freak book. Its arrangement is that of most beginning books; its grammar is carefully and conservatively stated in the usual terms and is amply sufficient for the student's needs; in fact there is more than he can be expected to learn outright. Physically the book

is attractive, carefully edited, and well illustrated; the pictures, however, might be better related to the text by adequate references to them. In the matter of literary illustrations, too, Professor Pharr really might have done better than to quote the Old Testament to the almost complete exclusion of anything else. The Old Testament, of course, furnishes excellent parallels, but after all, Homer is not Semitic, and there are passages in Greek and Latin literature which illustrate him better because they are a part of his own civilization, and which also demonstrate his great influence upon others. The debt of English literature to Homer, as well, might be shown in the same way.

The use of Homeric Greek in prose sentences must perforce seem strange, but if we grant the desirability of studying Homeric Greek in the beginning course this cannot be avoided. By using "made-up" Greek sentences for supplementary drill Professor Pharr seeks a method of keeping a mastery over forms and vocabulary from day to day, but at the same time he runs counter to the principle advocated by Professor James Turney Allen in his *First Year of Greek*, a book in which there is no Greek of modern construction.

No teacher, however, need hesitate to put this book in the hands of a class; it is an honestly made text. Since its appearance is something of an event, and since its author, after signal success in arousing interest in Greek by its means, makes in his introduction bold claims for the advantages of using Homer thus, a few observations may be made on the advisability of revising our methods.

The best argument pro must remain Homer's charm and the possibility of interesting students in him. Xenophon never called forth from anyone, nor could he call forth, such lyric enthusiasm as that of Andrew Lang (quoted, pp. xxxiv ff.), and this enthusiasm, at least to some degree, the ordinary student of literary tastes can share, for Homer's merits are plain and easy to appreciate. An author read in the first year must of necessity be taken in small doses, and Homer will not lose by such treatment as much as most others (I will not say *all* others).

Furthermore, I can see some advantage in teaching first grammatical forms which are historically earlier (see p. xviii), and building the later dialects upon them, for students learn a thing more thoroughly when they know the "why" of it and something about its genetics. It is the difference between rote learning and the building up of a logical train of thought.

Contra, however, it must be asked whether Homer is too difficult for beginners, and whether it is practical to learn Homeric Greek first. Both these points Professor Pharr notices, and of course he takes Homer's side, perhaps too enthusiastically. Homeric morphology is not forbiddingly hard for beginners to learn, and certainly his syntax is much easier than that of prose. I am not, however, convinced either that the number of Homeric forms to be memorized is so much less than that of the Attic forms, or that Homer's vocabulary is not harder than that of most prose writers, and this in spite of figures. With regard to the nouns and adjectives, for example,

I note that Professor Pharr counts among the Attic forms to be learned the duals and some of the endings for the "Attic second" declension; but certainly most of us no longer think it a sin to omit or to defer these. Taking account of the irregularities, Homer will be just as puzzling as a prose writer.

I greatly regret that I lack the facilities for verifying Professor Pharr's data about vocabularies, and that I have not the time to make independent counts. The tables which he gives on page xxiii, however, to my mind prove simply that there are two vocabularies for Greek literature generally, one prose, the other poetic, and the latter is strongly influenced by Homer. Plato, Herodotus, and Plutarch, among the prose writers mentioned, veer toward the poetic, and of the poets Aristophanes and Menander show close affinity with the prose vocabulary; the latter is the only poet in Professor Pharr's list of those who have more words in common with Xenophon than with Homer. The conclusion is simply that either Homer or Xenophon is the better preparation for further reading according to what authors you plan to study, and there is fine material in either list. But this bears little upon the question of relative difficulty, and I do not think that the mere citing of *ἄπαξ λεγόμενα* will decide it; they form too small a proportion of the whole vocabulary and besides we need not compare Homer with Xenophon alone, an author who has more than his share of peculiar words. What I suspect can be shown—and it is little more than suspicion based on casual observation—is that difficulty of vocabulary is closely connected with rapidity of change in subject. When Plato, for example, talks about one thing over a considerable stretch of text, as he is apt to, there must needs be a rather limited vocabulary in that particular passage. But Homer leaps from Troy to Chryse to Olympus, from peace to war, and hence will show a varied vocabulary in even a passage of limited compass. A trial count of *Iliad* i. 1-21, for example, shows thirty-nine different nouns, of which ten are used twice or more (of these five are proper names), sixteen adjectives, and twenty-four verbs; of the latter only two are more than once used. A passage which my own class has been reading, Plato's *Lysis* 207D-208B, about twenty-three Teubner lines, shows fifteen different nouns, nine adjectives, and twenty-eight verbs; four of the nouns and twelve of the verbs are used more than once, several four to six times each. Furthermore the list includes related words like *ἥ—ἔφη, εἰμί—ἔξεστι, ἐπιθυμέω—προθυμέω, μισθός—μισθωτός, ἡρία—ἡρίοχος*, and the verbs are such as constancy recur in all prose. This of course is but one instance, but I think it lends color to my suspicion that Homer talks about more different things in any given passage than most prose writers, and that his vocabulary at any given point is therefore likely to be correspondingly harder.

On the matter of relative difficulty, then, I would somewhat discount Professor Pharr's enthusiastic plea for Homer, and still believe that Homer and Attic Greek are about equally hard in accident, and that Homer is far easier in syntax, and more difficult in vocabulary, for the young student. We ought to recognize these things frankly, although they present no insuperable

obstacle to teaching Homer to beginners, for his interest, charm, and worth are enough to offset whatever may be said against him on this score, provided the project is desirable and practicable on other grounds.

The practical side of the question is, in the main, this: Is Homer a better foundation than Attic Greek for general reading? Here, too, Professor Pharr will have to temper his enthusiasm. He must recognize that the Attic dialect really did rule in the literary world from the time of the dramatists on, and that the Koine is more Attic than anything else; further, since of course the Attic is the best introduction to itself, it must also be the best introduction to the lion's share of Greek literature. (Even as an introduction to Homer it is not despicable.) The question really is that of the indispensability of Homer in the student's reading. If we hold that he must not be allowed to miss Homer, no matter what else he reads, we have a very good reason for teaching Homer in the first year. On the other hand, it is possible to introduce our classes immediately to an almost limitless field of Attic prose and poetry through such a book as that of Professor Allen. The two paths are open, and both are worthy. We must remember, too, that the *Anabasis* is not the only alternative to Homer.

To my mind, these are the main issues when prejudices are stripped away; the decisions each must make for himself. My own feeling is that either prose, well taught, or Homer, well taught, is a satisfactory introduction to the language, and I am much interested in the possibilities of Homer as a means of attracting more to the study of Greek. Let us by all means give him a trial, if we wish; for our own sakes and for those of our classes let us always be seeking improvement and not stagnate. Professor Pharr's plan, unlike some other pedagogical innovations, involves no trick, no special aptitude, simply good teaching, with the certain advantage of a delightful author to study and in the face of disadvantages in the way of added difficulties which may after all prove mere bugaboos.

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Q. *Horati Flacci Carminum Librum Quintum.* A Rudyardo Kipling et Carolo Graves Anglice redditum, et variorum notis adornatum ad fidem codicum mss. edidit ALUREDUS D. GODLEY. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1920. Pp. vi+34.

On first glance one would think that this "Fifth Book of the Odes of Horace" was nothing else than what it pretends to be. From the scholarly appearing Praefatio to the last translation, by an "incertae aetatis scholiasta," with the careful *apparatus criticus* at the bottom of each page, it has all the earmarks of a carefully edited text with translation. It is only upon closer examination that one discovers that the odes themselves have to do with such